



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 1.15

Subject:	News Media Relations for DCS Regional Offices and Juvenile Justice Facilities
Authority:	TCA 37-5-101, 37-5-102, 37-5-105, 37-5-106
Standards:	ACA: 3-JTS-1A-25; 3-JTS-1A-26; 3-JTS-1A-27; 3-JTS-1A-27-1; 3-JTS-3D-05 DCS Practice Standard: 8-306
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Employees

Policy Statement:

Representatives of the news media shall be permitted limited access to Department of Children's Services (DCS) offices and facilities subject to restrictions as outlined in this policy.

Purpose:

To provide guidelines for DCS employees when there is a need to interact with the public and media.

Procedures:

A. Public information program	This policy and the local procedures submitted to central office from all regional offices and DCS facilities locations serve as the Public Information Program.
B. Information available to the media	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Authorization required The DCS Public Information Officer (PIO) must be notified during and after working hours and his/her authorization obtained before any statement confirming information may be released to the media.2. News releases News releases must be disseminated only through the PIO or by advance approval from the PIO
C. Contact with the media	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Limits of contact The PIO or authorized designee is the only DCS employees authorized to interact with the media.2. Report of contact Any DCS employee other than the PIO who talks with the news media must

	<p>immediately report such contact to the appropriate Executive Director and the DCS PIO.</p> <p>3. Evaluation of media requests for contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Requests for media contact will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis that are determined by the right or need to know.b) Youth Development Center and DCS Group Home programs and services must not be jeopardized by the presence of the media.c) Approved media contact with a particular youth in a Youth Development Center or DCS Group Home must not disturb or threaten the progress the youth has made in the program.
D. Approval from DCS PIO for regional offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Each Regional Administrator must notify the appropriate Executive Director and receive approval from the DCS PIO of the designated contact person(s) in each office.2. The Regional Administrator must identify areas in the DCS regional offices that are accessible to media representatives and submit in writing to the DCS PIO.
E. Development of local procedures for YDC's and DCS Group Homes	<p>1. Contents of local procedures</p> <p>Each YDC and DCS Group Home must develop local procedures and forward it to the DCS PIO. Local Procedures must include all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Identification of areas in the facility that are normally accessible to media representatives;b) Designation of an employee within the facility authorized to speak with media representatives on behalf of the facility or DCS;c) Identification of data and information protected by privacy laws and/or freedom of information laws;d) Procedures for media coverage of special events or incidents,e) News release procedures; andf) Procedures for handling requests to tour the facility. <p>2. Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Each facility must notify the PIO of the designated contact person(s) for each facility.b) The PIO, the appropriate Central Office Director and the facility originating the local procedures must maintain a copy of all local media procedures.c) The PIO must maintain a list of the departmental contact persons.
F. Child/youth interviews	<p>1. Determination</p> <p>Requests for interviews will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. No interview</p>

	<p>will be granted that is deemed to be detrimental to the child/youth.</p> <p>2. Rights of children/youth</p> <p>Interviews are voluntary. The child/youth has the right not to be interviewed, photographed, or recorded by the media.</p> <p>3. Release by parent(s)/guardian</p> <p>a) If the media requests to interview, record, or photograph a child/youth in DCS custody, the assigned FSW or facility case worker must obtain a release form CS-0559, Authorization For Release of Child-Specific Information from DCS and Contract Service Providers, signed by the child/youth and the parent(s) or guardian of the child/youth prior to allowing the child/youth to be interviewed, recorded, or photographed.</p> <p>b) If a youth is over the age of eighteen (18) and in state custody, the parental consent is not required and the youth may consent and sign the release.</p> <p>c) If parental consent is required and if the parents or guardians are not known or their addresses are unknown and cannot be located, the Regional Administrator, YDC Superintendent, DCS Group Home Director or their designees may, at their discretion with the approval of the appropriate Executive Director, authorize the release of information.</p> <p>d) In all other circumstances, parental permission must be in writing and will be necessary in order for any media interview or release of information.</p> <p>3. If a parent or guardian objects to the interview or photograph being released through the media, then the Regional Administrator, Youth Development Center Superintendent, DCS Group Home Director or their designees <u>shall not</u> have any discretion and any information and photographs from the interview shall not be released. The appropriate section on form CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Child-Specific Information from DCS and Contract Service Providers, shall be signed if there are objections to the interview or photographs being released to the media.</p> <p>e) Signed releases must become part of the child/youth's case file.</p>
G. Interviews with employees	<p>1. Voluntary</p> <p>Personal interviews with staff members must be granted voluntarily.</p> <p>2. Approval required</p> <p>Any staff member wishing to grant an interview regarding DCS must obtain approval in advance from the appropriate Executive Director and the PIO</p>
H. Policy violations	<p>Violation of this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination.</p>

Forms:	<u>CS-0559, Authorization for Release of Child-Specific Information from DCS and Contract Service Providers</u>
Collateral documents:	<i>None</i>